April 1999

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Recommended Citation

Hiller, Eileen (1999) "Scatter and Save! An evaluation of the Adoption of Centralised Classification and Outsourcing," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 8.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3826>

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Scatter and Save! An Evaluation of the Adoption of Centralised Classification and Outsourcing.

by Eileen Hiller (Technical Services Librarian, University of Huddersfield) <e.m.hiller@hud.ac.uk>

Please note: British spelling has been retained.—KS

Huddersfield is a textile town in Yorkshire, in the North of England. It is close to "Bronte" country and the Yorkshire Dales and is famous in the UK for a TV comedy programme "Last of the Summer Wine." The university is known as a "new university," a status it achieved in 1992, having previously been a polytechnic since 1970. There has been a rapid expansion of student numbers in recent years to around 15,000 currently. Library staffing levels have been contained and much emphasis is placed in the university on student-centred learning in which library services play a vital part. As a result, staff time is increasingly needed at the "front end" of the service rather than in Technical Services.

So, "Scatter and Save". The title of this paper, not unlike the titles of some books, does not adequately describe the content. A title keyword search on a library catalogue would provide a surprising result for the student. The subtitle "an evaluation of the adoption of centralised classification and outsourcing" helps. By further explanation, here is a definition of what I mean by centralised classification ... "The use of classification numbers and subject indexing terms in bibliographical records assigned by a central agency. Quality control takes place in Technical Services.".....and what I am including in outsourcing ... "The use of a library vendor's shelf ready book system." Books arrive processed, spined, with full bibliographical and item records, for all collections at all sites.

The situation in the library at Huddersfield before deciding to look at our methods for making books "shelf ready" was as follows:

- Classification was done by subject librarians at a high staff cost, but it did provide a shelf order which matched the teaching of some of the courses in the university.
- Catalogue records had been bought from a commercial database following our migration to the **Horizon Library Management System** in 1996. We obtained an 86% hit rate for these records, but they were of a mixed quality. Some were of a consistently high standard, e.g. **Library of Congress**; some were records made to varying levels of **AACR 2** by contributing libraries and some were trade records which were very sub-standard. Clerical staff were trained to recognise and accept quality records. Sub-standard records were upgraded by professional cataloguers, who also origi-

nally catalogued the remaining 14% as well as videos and journals.- Processing of books, including inserting labels, stamps, security triggers and stiffening paperback covers, has always been outsourced to vendors. Service level agreements with vendors were negotiated to include service levels and costs.

The need to change was propelled by increasing constraints on staff time. Subject librarians were encouraged to be proactive towards students in an environment where self-directed study was becoming more and more important. In Technical Services, staff time was needed to address issues such as managing electronic formats and more clerical staff time was needed on the library counter to meet the demands of a growing student population. Backlogs of books awaiting classification had occurred because of the constraints on subject librarians' time and because of the amalgamation of the collections of three hospital libraries. As a consequence, throughput was seriously affected, some material taking months to appear on the shelves.

The final impetus to change came from the new Vice-Chancellor of the University, who visited the library and challenged the cost effectiveness of the library staffing budget in which expensive staff time was used to classify library materials. He also implemented a devolved budgeting method of allocating finance, so the library had to be cost effective to maximise resources.

A decision was made to evaluate the proposed changes, firstly the change to accepting classification numbers from a centralised agency and secondly the change to outsourcing the whole of the shelf ready books process, including catalogue records, classification and spining. There was some sizeable opposition to the suggested changes, so that effecting them would have been difficult without direct benefits which had been openly proved. Evaluation also: provided a benchmark, which would be a useful tool for measuring future improvements; provided further justification for the changes made and improved staff morale and; identified problems so that they could be overcome.

In order to outsource its technical service processes a library needs three vital ingredi-

ents—an advanced library management system, a centralised classification policy and an **EDI (Electronic Data Interchange)** ordering facility. A sophisticated library management system underpins the whole process and will provide the management information needed for evaluation. A centralised classification policy has to be agreed upon within the library, so that class numbers can be supplied automatically. These classification decisions should be kept as simple as possible and agreed with the vendor. Vendors can devise programming which will exclude certain numbers from the process, or make direct translations for specified numbers or accept numbers supplied by the library on the order record. EDI maximises speed of supply and vendors often insist upon it being used, as this is how they are able to provide the staff to support the shelf-ready books operation. However, its efficiency is impaired by the requirement to sign orders in line with an institution's financial rules. It was necessary to seek agreement from our finance department for bulk authorisation of orders sent electronically. We recently progressed this via a university-wide working party, in which we promoted the benefits to the organisation.

The library vendor also needs vital ingredients in implementing a shelf ready book system. They include an IT rich environment; commercially available catalogue records; a flexible workforce and good communication channels. The importance of technology cannot be underestimated. The vendor must be able to support EDI and provide software programming to meet the library's individual needs. Instructions from the library may include their requirements for the catalogue record and its quality; the classmark; the filing suffix and processing; item records; book reports and delivery with invoices. When catalogue records are not available to the vendor from a quality database, they must have an arrangement with an agency to supply catalogue records and be able to apply quality issues to the standard of cataloguing and classification. Although use of EDI frees up staff time, providing a shelf-ready service is a staff intensive operation. A flexible workforce will enable them to redirect staff to busy areas in order to maintain good supply times. Good communication with the library is very important, so that the service

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Librarians and subject experts make selections. Among other things, the site also includes background information for the novice, evaluative descriptions of search engines and subject related sites, and a "Kids Report" of sites designed for children. Reports of new sites are also available via email from the Scout listserv.

BUBL-LINK (<http://bubl.ac.uk/>) is a collection of Internet resources in all disciplines and is both browseable and searchable. This U.K. service includes more international resources than some U.S. sites.

The **ARGUS Clearinghouse for Subject Oriented Internet Resource Guides** provides topical guides to resources (<http://www.clearinghouse.net/>). It includes primarily popular and general interest materials and is both browseable and searchable. Compiled by librarians and MLS students, the Clearinghouse uses a rating system to evaluate five aspects of each site and then calculates an overall site rating.

Subject Web sites

Some of our colleagues have built and mounted subject Websites. These can be useful aids in the selection of Web resources. One example of this is the **InfoMine** from **University of California at Riverside** (<http://lib-www.ucr.edu/>). This site includes a browseable subject index that indicates the number of items associated with each subject term. The **Berkeley Digital Library SunSITE** (<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/>) is another catalog of Internet resources. Their "Librarians Index to the Internet" provides useful links. **Iowa State University has Cyberstacks** (<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/homepage.html>)—sites arranged by abridged LC classification or by subject.

These three categories of Web resources—communication with your clientele, bibliographers' tools, and Web resources selection tools—intertwine. To build a collection development page, each library needs to determine the appropriate mix of the three categories. A collection development Web page doesn't need to use all the bells and whistles available. Scanned images flashing logos, lots of frames, may be glitzy and eye-catching, but can be irritating. It's easier to start small and keep it simple. Employ basic principles of graphic design; choose a color scheme with good contrast between text and background, gain some knowledge of HTML and you'll be on your way.

Please note that a version of this paper was delivered at the 1998 Charleston Conference.—KS

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can continually be refined, as is good communication with library system suppliers, so that system developments are provided to support the process.

We needed to implement centralised classification at Huddersfield before we could begin to contemplate shelf-ready books. So we set up a working party to evaluate the new method of acquiring classmarks from catalogue records and measure against the traditional method. In analysing the scatter produced by central agency numbers, we matched a sample of 120 of these against those provided by a subject librarian. A scattergraph plotted the result, showing there was some degree of scatter around the median. Despite this, we decided that an acceptable amount were similar numbers. Subject indexing was also measured and the number of matches encouraging enough to suppose the majority of library patrons would be able to trace materials. However, subject indexing becomes very important for those titles, like the title of this paper, for which title keyword is not an adequate retrieval tool.

Time was measured using a control of 200 titles processed conventionally and 200 titles processed using the new system. Classification by a subject librarian took 2.87 minutes and subject indexing 4.25 minutes, a total of 7.12 minutes, yet it took on average 9.99 days for them to get around to doing it! Using the new method saved 10 days, as accepting a number from a catalogue record takes seconds. An hourly rate was applied to measure the cost of the traditional process added \$4 to the cost of a book, the new method only \$2.45. A saving of \$1.65!

Of course, the library management liked these results and so we began to implement centralised classification, but there were a number of problems, not least managing change. Staff worries were enormous because of the complete change of culture. Some subject librarians felt that classification had been their life's work and they preferred to adhere to a logical shelf order. They were unsure of their new role and what was involved in being proactive towards students. Technical services staff felt outsourcing to be so threatening that they were afraid they would lose their jobs. Lots of communication promoting the benefits was needed, as was reassurance that jobs would change, rather than be lost.

The loss of shelf browsing placed greater emphasis on the competence of student retrieval skills and so more library exercises were needed to foster student independence in using the library catalogue to find materials. The importance of subject indexing in successfully fulfilling subject requests via the catalogue is given more emphasis in this environment. There were worries staffing lev-

els were sufficient for this to be maintained and that the terminology of Library of Congress subject headings was not suitable for a UK university library. Machine options, for example, keyword access to table of contents, were possible alternatives.

Quality control was initially undertaken by subject librarians and in the first three months 30% of items were sent back for reprocessing. This became the most hated job in technical services. Further negotiation, refinement, and acceptance of the classification policy were needed. It did improve once the benefits in terms of speed and freed up time became more obvious and scatter became more acceptable. There is a need to centralise validation in Technical Services so that errors only are reprocessed rather than slight differences of opinion in classification.

Once the centralised classification policy had become established, shelf-ready books systems could be used. Again we decided to evaluate the process and a working party was set up to measure throughput and errors. The **Horizon** management information software **Reportsmith** was used to analyse data in the system. Reports were generated comparing time from order to receipt, receipt to shelf and time from order to shelf for books ordered conventionally and those ordered via a shelf-ready books service. A throughput of 3-5 days was found to be possible within Technical Services (receipt to shelf) and an order to shelf time for the shelf-ready book service better than that for all other vendors.

Errors were logged in a manual file indicating the source of reprocessing. Once the classification policy had settled down, we found only a small percentage needed reprocessing, 3.7% but a further 4.7% needed reprocessing due to supplier error. A total of 8.4% of items to be reprocessed is rather counter-productive and demoralising to staff. In order to improve efficiency further, the working party report recommended merging the acquisitions and cataloguing working practices. This has yet to be implemented.

One very positive result of using a shelf-ready books system for acquiring catalogue records is that the hit rate becomes 100%, as the vendor provides records via an agency for those not available on databases. The quantity of material requiring professional cataloguing in the department was therefore much reduced. It had been 14% in 1996 and was 9% in 1998, a reduction of about one third. Further reduction should be possible when outsourcing in this way is extended. As a result, we have reduced the professional cataloguing staff, by moving one cataloguer to manage journals, particularly electronic formats and extending the senior cataloguer's role to include access to electronic texts.

The evaluation positively encouraged the adoption of shelf-ready book systems, but

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Training the New Selector

by **Thomas Izbicki** (Johns Hopkins University) <izbicki@jhu.edu>

This paper was written for delivery at a "Lively Lunch" at the 1998 Charleston Library Conference. It was delivered in a somewhat different form. The oral form began with an examination of the presuppositions for the written paper: that we hire experienced librarians who do not need to be told certain elementary things and that we have enough of a budget to permit the trainer to emphasize addition of resources, not the management of cancellation projects. The oral form also emphasized even more strongly the first part of the training program here, the part dealing with presuppositions. An emphasis on processes would have run afoul of differences in procedures between libraries.—TI

Last year's discussion of the role of the Collection Development Officer omitted an important topic, the training of new selectors. My own experience over seven years of training new Resource Services Librarians has taught me several things about this topic. Among them are the need to anticipate vacancies and to prepare for interim arrangements, to be followed by the orientation of a new colleague to our particular environment. Part of this process is the documentation of the programs, using—in our case—a Departmental Profile (handout 1). This form is updated by the departing librarian and kept current by myself, to guide both the interim selector and the next permanent staff member. It represents a synthetic overview of the situation, including both the librarian's ideas and patron input.

The newly hired librarian goes through a

five-session orientation. The first covers expectations and an overview of the Collection Development aspect of our "dual assignment" role in the library's larger effort to make collections and services fit the needs of the academic community. I will dwell on this session at length in a few minutes. The second deals with monographs, including approval plans, direct orders, gifts and brittle books. The third deals with electronic products proposals, and it is the most recent addition to the program. The fourth deals with serials, especially print serials. The last session focuses on the budget structure and the overall fiscal situation of the library, as well as its calendar for budgeting and spending (handout 2). (It is intended to run parallel with an orientation by the Acquisitions Department to the means of accessing and reading fund records.) These sessions usually are spaced one a week to permit the new librarian to absorb a great deal of detail, but they can be accelerated by mutual agreement between trainer and new selector.

A lesson learned from speaking with selectors is the need for follow-up. I now do a formal follow-up session a month later, but an open door policy encourages questions outside the formal structure of the training program. Another step being contemplated is a six-month review, informal in nature, to provide further input. Nothing in the annual performance appraisal should come as a surprise. Nor should honest errors be punished. That only discourages initiative. Also of great importance is documentation. The new librarian is given a copy of the Collection Development Policy, Performance Appraisal Criteria (handout 3), the Calendar and a Procedures Manual.

the majority of library materials. At that stage we will need to reevaluate and redefine the system so that all books arrive fully shelf-ready, processed and spined, with catalogue and item records for all collections at all sites, able to be successfully retrieved by users. All that is required from a multi-skilled Technical Services is order, receipt, invoicing and quality control, with a highly motivated staff looking forward to an exciting future—Utopia!

Please note that a version of this paper was delivered at the 1998 Charleston Conference.—KS

(Keeping it up-to-date in a changing environment is a major challenge.) These are accompanied by copies of the appropriate Departmental Profiles.

I want to spend most of my time here on the contents of the first session, which deals with expectations and roles. The new selector needs to know how the Collection Development Coordinator, my title in our department, does business. My own approach is fairly flexible. I expect each selector to adapt the overall guidelines to different needs. This is particularly true of a university which has two traditional, on campus colleges, Arts and Sciences and Engineering, coupled with a School of Continuing Studies, which offers its programs at academic centers located as far away as the nation's capital and Rockville, Maryland. Furthermore, one has to accommodate the different needs of the academic disciplines and, increasingly, demands of students from all over the world for materials, especially newspapers, reflecting their own interests and cultural backgrounds. As I tell the trainee, my preference is to give them maximum leeway; but, when in doubt, they can come to bounce around ideas. Anything that sounds workable is permitted; anything which is not is given a full explanation of complicating or prohibiting factors.

The new selector must be given a clear set of expectations. The most important of these include knowing the particular public and anticipating the collections needs of that public. This philosophy places a high value on the liaison role of the individual librarian. It is necessary to know not just the needs of the faculty but those of the students, graduate and undergraduate. Lately it has meant knowing the needs of the staff for technical manuals explaining particular computer systems and applications. Time constraints do not permit constant visiting of offices or frequent attendance at seminars, but both remain useful. Most recently, I have encouraged electronic faculty liaison as a means of disseminating information of a more general nature. General messages, in turn, elicit inquiries about more particular needs. (They also can elicit complaints or suggestions about services, requests for instruction sessions and observations about our new **Horizon** system.) The same service has been extended to graduate students, who appreciate being consulted and who articulate their own needs, often accompanied by editorials about the library.

Directly connected to the issue of expectations is that of performance appraisal. As noted above, no significant statement in an appraisal should be a surprise; but the Criteria offer something more than a checklist of

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there are still issues to address: • We need to talk to vendors to provide further processes such as item records, books for other collections and at other sites; • The classification policy has not yet included law and computing, more negotiation needed to simplify instructions to vendors; • "Machine" alternatives to Library of Congress subject headings need to be investigated; • Staff training in new working practices and in quality control, so that good standard records are acquired, with errors in classification able to be identified. In the future we need to extend the process to